

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY-BELLEVUE MEDICAL CENTER
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

477 FIRST AVENUE, NEW YORK 16, N.Y.

DEPARTMENT OF PHARMACOLOGY

OREGON 9-3200

Aug. 27, 1954.

Dear Joshua,

Thanks for your recent note. I'm afraid I don't see that the added information from Harry Eagle really affects the situation very much. It's Plumb's desire for a sensational story that led him to decide, unlike other reporters^(s) present, to feature Harry's talk; and I think Harry was right in modestly denying that this story was worth featuring. In consequence, I think Plumb still bears the responsibility for the features of the article that we have criticized. Since I am more interested in convincing the editor of the desirability of avoiding distortion and sensationalism than I am in making trouble for Plumb, I think it's fine that Plumb, when questioned by the editor, will be able to offer in his defense the fact that Eagle refused the requested interview; I would still like to call to the editor's ~~####~~ attention the ~~serious~~ *fictional* aspects of this news story.

I appreciate your suggestion that I feel free to send the letter in under my own signature, and that is what I shall do if you still want to stay out of it. I hope you will change your mind, though, both because most of the letter is really yours, and because it would gain in authority from the double signature. Please let me know what you finally decide.

As to the possibility of recasting the letter: I don't have much inclination to try it since I'm quite satisfied with the present version. If you want to try it I'd be glad to see whether we could agree on the changes you propose; but I'm afraid the history of the writing of the present version suggests that any attempt to agree on major alterations would require quite a series of communications between us.

We moved into the new lab two days ago, and are so far without filing cabinets, etc. -- quite a mess. But I like the general layout very much.

I hope you[#] and Esther are having a good vacation. Regards to Franz et al.

Sincerely,

Francis

August 28, 1954

Dear Bernie--

I would leave it up to you, Bernie. If you agree that this qualification is necessary, received young, on the 23rd. If we had the time together, I am sure I could write out a memorandum for you. Our letter that would be mutually satisfactory. (Now I hear understanding without adopting this view), then the most could perhaps be for you to go ahead alone according to your own lights.

It was not my thought that Plumb's article could be excused on account of Harry's reticence. But the letter does imply a rather strong criticism of Plumb. His attempt to get an interview is certainly pertinent (everyone I've asked up here has thought so), and to omit any mention of it would mean we were not telling the whole story, which in turn would weaken our position as fair commentators. Either the whole tone of the letter should be changed in favor of a more detached assertion that the story was inaccurate, leaving out any intimations of responsibility, or, if the present tone is kept, we have to add something to the effect that "These errors might have been avoided if the reporter had been able to check with the speaker. We learned that Dr. Eagle was unwilling or unable to be interviewed ~~by the reporter~~ prior to his talk, as requested by the reporter. This is a dubious justification for gross inaccuracy and, in any event, the facts should now be correctly set out. ~~As Concededly,~~ science reporting would be benefitted by less reticence from the scientists; on the other hand, their confidence is hardly bolstered by a sensational approach to science news."

Yours sincerely,